

Member State and Expert Roundtable, 4-5 September 2014

Global Perspectives on Peaceful and Inclusive Societies and the Post-2015 Framework: A Dialogue between Member States and Experts

Meeting Summary

Background

In July 2014, the United Nations Open Working Group (OWG) on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) finalized its outcome document. In early September 2014, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) passed a resolution that adopted the outcome document as the main basis for integrating the SDGs into the post-2015 development framework.

On 4-5 September 2014, the Mission of Mexico to the United Nations, in partnership with the NYU Center on International Cooperation and Saferworld, convened a meeting bringing together representatives from UN member states as well as experts from the South African Liaison Office, Institute for Peace and Security Studies, Igarapé Institute, Observer Research Foundation, United Nations Foundation, UNDP, and the Mediterranean Research Center, for an interactive discussion on peaceful societies and the post-2015 development framework. The meeting was intended to provide an opportunity for member states and experts to discuss the post-2015 framework and specifically the goal of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development.

Topics covered included: development approaches to reducing violence and crime-prevention, including the experience of Mexico; various stakeholders' perspectives on peaceful and inclusive societies in the post-2015 agenda; strengths and weaknesses and areas of consensus and potential improvement of Goal 16 and its related targets; the next steps forward in the post-2015 negotiation process; and concerns and questions regarding capacity of all actors to influence the post-2015 agenda, the means of implementation, sovereignty, and aid conditionalities. This note provides a brief summary of the main points that emerged during the discussion, which was held under the Chatham House Rule.

Mexico's experience

In Mexico, the social prevention of violence and crime policy is part and parcel of promoting peaceful and inclusive societies at the country level. Through the Ministry of the Interior and the National Institute of Statistics and Geography, Mexico has initiated an unprecedented national effort to produce specialized information of social and community dynamics. Underscoring the

role that data can play in preventing violence in local communities, Mexico's Social Cohesion and Crime Prevention Survey is the country's first survey that comprehensively estimates primary risk factors and levels of social cohesion that affect trust among citizens and authorities in charge of public national security. The data program, undertaken in conjunction with the government's \$10 billion investment across 9 different ministries towards violence prevention, drives the country's development efforts to achieve a peaceful Mexico.

Overall expert impressions of the OWG outcome document

There was a strong consensus that the OWG outcome document represents a remarkable accomplishment because of the inclusivity and universality behind the process to date. Inclusion of Goal 16 had been a reflection of international compromise. One participant viewed the OWG process as both unique and innovative, emphasizing the unprecedented participation of all countries. Furthermore, another participant noted that member states must remember the role that civil society played in the framing of the SDGs, particularly with respect to the targets.

One speaker underscored the need to address the issues of prioritization - and of how to make the goals and targets communicable and measurable; some targets place emphasis on process and capacity, others on outcomes and others were indicators. As a result, several experts suggested that there would be merit in a technical review of the targets and further work by the UN to develop indicators. Expert also raised questions with regard to the number of goals (17) and 169 targets, questioning whether this is realistic and understandable to all people and provides a firm basis for transformative change. How would member states communicate a clear vision to all people and measure progress?

Some experts also raised concerns about some aspects of Goal 16, in particular: target 16.a on the means of implementation could be a measure of coercive counter-terrorism interventions, not development initiatives. Experts also asked why the goal included a target to eliminate violence against children but not women? Not all of the linkages across all of the goals and targets had been clarified. Experts also raised concerns about how Goal 16 would be implemented - it should not lead to new aid conditionalities. Lastly, experts asked if the whole agenda had to be implemented in every country or whether countries would select from the goals and targets most important to them? Understanding this was important for accountability to all people for delivery and for defining and communicating to all people expectations of the new agenda.

Finally, experts raised questions about the process going forward. While a number of experts agreed that it is important to not reopen the whole OWG document, it would be important to ensure a technical process to enable refinement of the targets in such a way that they are concise, actionable, implementable, and measurable at the country level for practitioners. Experts suggested that the Secretary-General had an important advisory role in this regard. Experts also underlined that the process to the end of 2015 had to take account of capacities of all countries. Many countries with the most to win or lose from this framework had less capacity to continue to negotiate the details of goals and targets - for many countries the means of implementation and finance for development would now be the priorities. Any process going forward had to take account of all countries' priorities and capacities and had to sustain the universal and inclusive nature of the process to date - trust had to continue to be built between countries.

The pathway going forward

It was generally acknowledged that the OWG document represented a good outcome. Some of the key questions among speakers are as follows:

- Does the OWG document represent the final list of goals and targets for the SDGs?
- Can the international community finance and implement these commitments?
- To what extent do states have knowledge of effective development approaches to implement with confidence the ideas in Goal 16?
- What is missing from the agenda?
- How can we be sure that the goals and targets are transformative?
- How will universality work in practice?

Some speakers raised the possibility of reopening the OWG document in order to prioritize it. Some speakers expressed surprise because it was already a negotiated outcome; the time had come to consider its implementation. Reopening the document risked unraveling many or all aspects of it, overstressing the poorest or smallest countries and undermining confidence.

Speakers stressed that much work remains on financing, implementation, monitoring, and accountability. Some of these issues would start to be addressed in the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing (ICESDF) report, as well as through the parallel UN climate change and WTO talks. Many participants hoped that the Secretary-General would advise countries on the process for handling these important issues of implementation in his forthcoming report.

Experts emphasized the continued importance of including civil society from around the world in the process leading to the summit in 2015. A universal framework would be implemented by all people.

With respect to universality and implementation, certain areas of the framework will inevitably be more relevant in some states more than others. But a concern remains as to how universality translates into policy on the ground. Indeed, the key is to ensure that the implementation is guided by country ownership and to highlight the role that better data capacities can play, as well as countries sharing experience with one another.

Some speakers asked what was missing from the document and how to conduct technical quality control to the document to ensure that it would be transformative after 2015. The process for assuring this was not yet clear. Furthermore, there was broad agreement among participants that much work lies ahead with respect to indicators, which is crucial to the operationalization and measurement of the agenda.

Experts suggested that moving forward, all countries and future negotiations must place an emphasis on trust-building between member states and ensuring that all countries have capacity to influence the process.